

Testimony of Dale R. Hoyt, Ed.D.  
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on

H.B. 5447 - AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE  
AUDITORS OF A PUBLIC ACCOUNTS CONCERNING PRIVATE PROVIDERS OF  
SPECIAL EDUCATION

Education Committee  
March 14, 2018

Senators Slossberg and Boucher, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee, I am testifying in opposition of House Bill 5447, An Act Implementing the recommendations of the auditors of a public accounts concerning private providers of special education.

My name is Dr. Dale Hoyt and I am the Vice President for Education at Ädelbrook, a non-profit, behavioral and developmental service agency. I am representing the three Learning Centers and two Transitional Academies that currently serve 151 students. In addition, we provide residential services for many of our students, of which, 35 live on our main campus in Cromwell and 9 others live in Continuous Residential Support (CRS) homes that we operate.

Ädelbrook's Learning Centers are private special education programs certified by the State Department of Education to serve students with severe autism, neurodevelopmental disorders, emotional disturbance, and learning disabilities from pre-Kindergarten through grade 12. Ädelbrook's Transitional Academies, for students ages 18 through 21, focus on life-long learning and life skills, and employment proficiencies through meaningful work experiences and community engagement. As such, these students require specialized professional services, additional support staff and advanced technology. Class size and related classroom space are directly correlated to the needs of the students as directed by their Individualized Education Programs (IEP). The majority of the day school and residential students have severe autism that requires specialized educational programs, and increased supervision and support in order for the students to be successful. In the classrooms, our students benefit from the low student to faculty/staff ratios in order to receive the support needed to maintain positive behavior and access curriculum.

A recent example of success is when Alex (a residential student with severe autism and other disabilities) came to Ädelbrook, he was self-injurious, aggressive and non-verbal. Last year, he graduated from the Learning Center in Cromwell and gave the commencement address using "Go Talk Now" technology. Alex continues his success within our educational continuum at the Transitional Academy in Middletown.

When a school district cannot effectively address specific individual student's need, private approved special education placement becomes necessary. Courts have made clear the constitutional rights of such children to attend school and to be classified accurately and instructed appropriately. Hence, these fine students with qualified disabilities have additional rights that guarantee them a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). When the public school system selects an approved private special education program, such as Ädelbrook, services include behavioral, developmental, and educational resources that are essential elements of a free appropriate public education under IDEA, and they must be provided regardless of the cost.

At Ädelbrook, we are at the forefront with special educational services, speech pathology and audiology, psychological services, occupational and recreational therapy, social work services, identification and assessment, nutritional services, school health services, counseling services, medical services for diagnostic and evaluation purposes, parent education and training, and school nurse services that are necessary for a child with a disability to benefit from an approved special education program. Recruitment of professional staff who are willing to work with very dysfunctional, and at times aggressive students, requires creative and monetary incentives to continue these essential services.

Ädelbrook's services are in demand by several public school districts who are paying for our residential care so that their students may attend our Learning Centers and Transitional Academies. Since 1900, Ädelbrook has a long history of assisting students in achieving academic, social and clinical success. Ädelbrook's success is based on the promise of a future filled with achievement, happiness and hope for each student we serve.

The abovementioned services provided at Ädelbrook, and the severity and complexity of the needs of our students has led to higher levels of training, specialization, management, and expertise to meet the demands and needs of each child entrusted into our care. This ultimately affects the cost on a student-by-student basis that cannot be simply standardized to a "one size fits all" formula. We oppose HB 5447 to establish a rate schedule for the provision of special education private providers of special education services.

This testimony regarding our opposition to HB 5447 is submitted on behalf of the students we serve at Ädelbrook.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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